



Living Healthy,  
Working Well

# Wellness Tips

## Recognizing and Managing Stress

In the wake of September 11<sup>th</sup>, the holidays this year may be a little more stressful than usual. To ensure a happy and stress-free holiday, it's good to know what stress is and how to manage it. Stress is a physical or mental reaction to demanding situations. A certain amount of daily stress is normal and necessary. However, ongoing or excessive stress, either positive or negative, can result in fatigue, burnout and even depression. This tip sheet identifies some of the symptoms of stress and offers ways to help you manage the stress in your life.

### Symptoms of Stress

Learning to recognize the symptoms is the first step in effectively managing stress. Some signals that will alert you to excessive stress include:

- difficulty sleeping
- decreased satisfaction with tasks
- constant feeling of urgency
- tension headaches, backaches, stomachaches or other physical discomforts

### Managing Stress

A number of techniques can assist you in reducing stress. We recommend that you experiment with the following methods and use those that are most effective for you:

- *Take care of yourself.* Eating healthy foods and getting plenty of rest will help you maintain your body's resistance to the physical symptoms of stress.
- *Manage your time.* Take charge of your day by scheduling your time and focusing on your goals. Create a list of tasks to accomplish. Be sure to cross items off your list as they are completed.
- *Identify the messages you give yourself.* Focus on what you can do rather than your limitations. Be positive.
- *Try deep muscle relaxation.* Start by tensing your shoulders for about 10 seconds. Slowly release the tension and you will begin to feel your muscles relax. Try this exercise for all major muscle areas.
- *Make time for fun.* Take a break from your normal routine during the day to ease tension. Physical exercise or just a change of scenery, such as an evening at the movies, can help you relax.

Reducing and managing stress can restore balance to your life, making your time at work and home more positive and rewarding. For more help, contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Counselors are available 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

